



NRC NEWS

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NRC PROPOSES \$60,000 FINE AGAINST POINT BEACH NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed a \$60,000 fine against Nuclear Management Company for making changes without NRC approval to the emergency plan at the Point Beach Nuclear Plant that decreased its effectiveness. The plant is located near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

Between July 28 and December 16, 2003, the NRC conducted a special inspection to review the utility's corrective actions for two findings of high safety significance in the auxiliary feedwater system. The inspection involved a comprehensive review of principal aspects of plant operations, including a review of the plant's emergency preparedness.

NRC inspectors found that between October 1998 and December 1999, changes had been made to the emergency action level (EAL) scheme that reduced the effectiveness of Point Beach's emergency plan without requesting and obtaining NRC approval. These changes also resulted in use of a non-standard emergency level scheme, which is used to properly identify the level of emergency at a nuclear power plant and to determine the appropriate actions that must be taken in response to the emergency.

"The failure to receive NRC approval before changing EALs that decrease the effectiveness of the Emergency Plan is a significant safety issue. The failure to submit the changes and receive NRC approval prevents the NRC from performing its regulatory function and potentially prevents the NRC from ensuring the health and safety of the public," writes James L. Caldwell, regional administrator for NRC's Region III in Lisle, Illinois, in his March 17 letter to the Nuclear Management Company.

During a predecisional enforcement conference conducted on January 13 of this year, between the NRC and Nuclear Management Company, to discuss the apparent violation, its significance, root causes and the company's corrective actions, it became apparent that the utility had failed to take appropriate immediate correction action to restore the emergency plan to compliance.

Subsequently, Nuclear Management Company has taken appropriate action to restore the emergency plan to compliance and has initiated a review of emergency plans at other nuclear power plants operated by the company and to correct problems as they are found.

The company has until April 16 to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, Nuclear Management Company can request a hearing.

The notice to the company of the proposed fine and the notice of violation are available from the Region III Office of Public Affairs and on the NRC's web site at:
<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/enforcement/actions/reactors/p.html#PointBeach>.

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